

House Resolution

No. 60

Introduced by Assembly Member Vincent

June 15, 2000

House Resolution No. 60—Relative to Juneteenth, Emancipation Day.

1 WHEREAS, June 19, 2000, marks the 135th anniversary
2 of Juneteenth, Emancipation Day; and

3 WHEREAS, Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, is considered
4 the date when the last slaves in America were freed when
5 General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas, and
6 issued General Order No. 3, almost 2¹/₂ years after
7 President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation
8 Proclamation; and

9 WHEREAS, President Lincoln issued the
10 Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862,
11 notifying the states in rebellion against the Union that if
12 they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he
13 would declare their slaves forever free, a proclamation
14 that was ignored by those states that seceded from the
15 Union and that did not apply to those slave-holding states
16 that did not rebel against the Union, resulting in about
17 8,000,000 slaves unaffected by the proclamation; and

18 WHEREAS, Juneteenth is observed as a legal holiday in
19 Texas and Oklahoma and is celebrated annually in more
20 than 200 cities in the United States, with some cities
21 sponsoring weeklong celebrations culminating on June 19
22 and others holding shorter celebrations; and

1 WHEREAS, Juneteenth symbolizes for many
2 African-Americans what the Fourth of July symbolizes for
3 all Americans — freedom, serves as a historical milestone
4 reminding Americans of the triumph of the human spirit
5 over the cruelty of slavery, honors those
6 African-American ancestors who survived the inhumane
7 institution of bondage, and demonstrates pride in the
8 marvelous legacy of resistance and perseverance those
9 ancestors left behind; and

10 WHEREAS, Freedom meant more than the right to
11 travel freely; it meant the right to name one's self, to
12 legalize marriages, to seek an education, to assemble and
13 openly worship, and, for the first time, to have the laws
14 of the United States protect the rights of Blacks; and

15 WHEREAS, Although the promise of emancipation
16 gave freedmen optimism for the future, few realized that
17 slavery's bitter legacy was just beginning to unfold and
18 that equality was to remain an elusive dream; and

19 WHEREAS, Ex-slaves, who entered freedom under the
20 worst possible conditions, most penniless and homeless
21 with only the clothes on their backs, were, as Frederick
22 Douglas said, "free, without roofs to cover them, or bread
23 to eat, or land to cultivate, and as a consequence died in
24 such numbers as to awaken the hope of their enemies that
25 they would soon disappear"; and

26 WHEREAS, By 1877, the end of Reconstruction, the
27 North had abandoned Black Americans to the will of
28 southern Whites, who, through violence, racial
29 discrimination, and Jim Crow laws, succeeded in
30 disenfranchising them, resulting in more than 100 years
31 of oppression, while Blacks turned to the only institution
32 that gave them hope, the church; and

33 WHEREAS, The fact that it took the Civil War to
34 enforce the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th
35 Amendment to the United States Constitution, and to
36 forcibly end slavery, left a bitter legacy that continues to
37 divide American society and still haunts our country; and

38 WHEREAS, African-Americans celebrate the Fourth
39 of July in honor of American Independence Day, but



1 history reminds us that Blacks were still enslaved when
2 the United States obtained its independence; and

3 WHEREAS, According to historian John Hope
4 Franklin, “the Founding Fathers (by allowing slavery)
5 set the stage for every succeeding generation of
6 Americans to apologize, compromise and temporize on
7 those principles of liberty that were supposed to be the
8 very foundation of our system of government and way of
9 life...that is why this nation tolerated and, indeed,
10 nurtured the cultivation of racism that has been as
11 insidious as it has been pervasive”; and

12 WHEREAS, The legacy of racism has grown into
13 perhaps the greatest internal threat that this country
14 faces because, as John Hope Franklin aptly put it, “slavery
15 weakened America’s moral authority”; and

16 WHEREAS, Despite living under the most inhumane
17 conditions known to humankind, Blacks contributed
18 everything from agricultural inventions, to medical
19 breakthroughs and to music; crafted incredible
20 sculptures, designed beautiful buildings, and helped
21 build a nation; and preserved a culture and succeeded in
22 passing down a legacy of music, language, food, religion,
23 and a lesson in survival; and

24 WHEREAS, Slavery taught America a lesson of
25 cooperation demonstrated by the fact that Blacks and
26 Whites together created an antislavery movement that
27 ultimately succeeded, fought and died together to force
28 an end to slavery, and have worked throughout the
29 nation’s history for social justice; and

30 WHEREAS, While the painful memory of slavery
31 makes it difficult to celebrate Juneteenth, it is the positive
32 legacy of perseverance and cooperation that makes it
33 impossible to ignore; now, therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California,*
35 That June 19 is hereby declared permanently as
36 Juneteenth throughout the State of California; and be it
37 further

38 *Resolved,* That the Assembly urges all Californians to
39 take this opportunity to reflect on the significant role that
40 African-Americans have played in the history of the

1 United States, and California in particular, and on the
2 positive impact that African-Americans continue to make
3 on society; and be it further

4 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly
5 transmit copies of this resolution to the State Library, the
6 State Archives, the State Department of Education, and
7 the author for appropriate distribution.

